

Thomas Macy Warehouse
North Side of Straight Wharf
Nantucket
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-914

HABS
MASS
10-NANT
35-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

THOMAS MACY WAREHOUSE

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MASS
10-NANT
35-

Location: North Side of Straight Wharf,
Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Nantucket Foundation Inc.

Present Occupant: Nantucket Foundation Inc.

Present Use: Seasonal, by Artists' Association of Nantucket
for exhibition purposes and occasional concerts.
In recent years known as the Kenneth Taylor
Galleries.

Brief Statement
of Significance: A large brick warehouse for ships' stores built
immediately after the Great Fire of 1846 during
Nantucket's whaling prosperity.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1846 -- All of the many warehouses in this area were destroyed by the great conflagration in July. This piece of land was owned by Levi Starbuck who sold to Thomas Macy in September of that year. Macy immediately built the present structure.
- 1905 -- James A. Holmes, Jr. and B. Chester Pease bought the property from Lydia H. and Mary Eliza Macy, who inherited it from their grandfather, Thomas Macy.
- 1931 -- James A. Holmes, Jr. bought out Pease's share.
- 1944 -- Nantucket Foundation Inc. purchased the property from the Estate of James A. Holmes, Jr.

In August, 1944, Nantucket Foundation Inc. also bought the small building and land next west, from the Estate of Elmer F. Baker. (Abstract, Records Registry of Deeds, Nantucket, Mass.)

2. Date of erection: 1846. This is shown by dated marble set in the brick gable end wall high above the entrance door.
3. Architect: None known.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No plans known. Built of brick on made land. There was a block and tackle high on the south end for hoisting material to the second story. Little structural change.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The building when purchased by Nantucket Foundation Inc. in 1944 was in great disrepair. It was restored by Everett U. Crosby. A survey made at the time of purchase showed the granite thresholds of the great front and rear doors to be precisely on the one level, showing no settlement having taken place in the approximately one hundred years of their existence. The courses of brick in the east and west walls were on the same correct level and in line.

In September, 1944, before the reconstruction had been completed, a hurricane blew off a portion of the plank and slate roof. (Abstract, Notes of Everett U. Crosby who was directly responsible and supervised the restoration.)

More recently a new stairway was constructed and panels placed on the inside walls for exhibition purposes.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Thomas Macy, Moderator of Nantucket's Town Meeting in September, 1846, was selected to sign the letter of thanks to all cities and towns which helped Nantucket **after** the great fire disaster of 1846. This letter appeared in a great many newspapers around the country.

In 1852 Thomas Macy was listed in Rich Men of Massachusetts as worth \$90,000 with the notation: "Mostly inherited. Merchant. Formerly blacksmith. Fair benevolence." His sons Isaac and Philip Macy inherited **their** father's business and were remembered for their fine clothes and leisurely way of life. As the neighbors watched them go to the Macy warehouse late in the morning, they were known to chant, "Philip and Isaac were two pretty men, They never got up 'til half past ten".

The safe on the second floor with a giant key hanging beside it was all that was left of the Manufacturers and Mechanics Bank which stood on the east corner of Main and Federal Streets until destroyed in the fire of 1846. At that time it was moved to the Macy Warehouse just under construction.

During the occupancy of Holmes and Pease and later just Holmes, the warehouse was used as headquarters for the business of contractors and builders. The small building to the west was used by Mr. Baker, who was a machinist, The lane at the rear of the building is called Still Dock, and originally was a waterway.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Photograph of Straight Wharf with this building before restoration clearly visible in Aerial Views of Nantucket, Mass. 1926 by Henry Lang; snapshots showing hurricane damage 1944, on file with records of Nantucket Foundation Inc.

2. Bibliography:

Notes of Everett U. Crosby in possession of Mrs. Marie M. Coffin, Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Report of survey and appraisal of property done in 1944, in files of Nantucket Foundation Inc.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
April, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Typical mid-nineteenth century warehouse presently used as an art gallery; first and second floors used for display, loft for storage; brick masonry bearing wall construction, gable roof.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 42' - 5" by 45' - 2".
2. Foundations: Stone and brick masonry.
3. Wall construction: Bearing wall, running bond at Main Street facade, common and irregular bonds elsewhere; typical brick dimension is 2" by 7" by 3½" thick at first floor, 1' - 0" at second; fragments of cement wash on west wall, west wall painted grey; fire-wall between this building and Holmes and Wyer Carpenter Shop to the east.
4. Structural system: Wall bearing and post and lintel with boxed 10½" by 10½" posts at first floor, 11" by 11" beams and 3½" by 10" joists at second floor; 7½" by 7½" posts at second floor, 9" by 10½" beams and 3" by 8" joists at loft floor; 7¼" by 7¼" rafters and purlins in roof; mortise and tenon construction, treenail and metal fasteners; beams show adze marks; joists are vertically sawn.

5. Chimneys: Two in-wall brick chimneys, single flue, corbelled necking and cowl, thimble for stove pipe at interior of east wall first floor.
6. Stoops and bulkheads: Granite sill and wood stoop at south entrance, granite sill at north doorway; exterior wood stairway to second floor at northeast corner.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main Street (south): simple granite trim, two modern glazed doors. North doorway: doorway same as south doorway, vertical and diagonal board doors open to the exterior, fixed modern glazed panels and out-swinging doors behind board doors.
 - b. Windows: Granite lintel and sills, wood frame and sash, six-over-six single hung, iron hangers and one iron catch for exterior shutters (removed) remain; arched openings at interior; horizontal iron bar at mid-point of some windows.
8. Roof: Gable, composition shingles, no eaves, sheet metal gutters; corbelled cornice in dentil pattern at south gable, two courses corbelled at eaves; roof sheathing perpendicular to slope.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
 - a. First floor: Vestibule at Main Street entrance built of modern glazed partitions, single display space, toilet in southwest corner space which appears to have once been a vault; staircase to second floor.
 - b. Second floor: Display space, office and toilet, storage, stair to loft.
 - c. Loft: Storage with wood racks for paintings.
2. Stairways: Simple straight run with single step and landing at first floor; stair to loft is open string construction.
3. Flooring: Wood boards and strips of various widths, some plastic floor covering.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Exposed brick walls, board and batten partitions, modern display panels; no finished ceiling.

5. Doorways and doors: Miscellaneous modern paneled doors.
6. Decorative features and trim: Marble insert in south gable marked 1846 and modern carved board "Artists' Association of Nantucket" placed above south entrance.
7. Notable hardware:
 - a. Hoist in loft space is of wood and metal, manual operation, wood and metal wheel and axle, metal gears; hatches in second and first floors.
 - b. strap iron hinges, iron beam hangers, iron shutter catch and hangers.
8. Lighting: Modern electric.
9. Heating: None.

D. Site and Surroundings:

The Macy Warehouse faces south on Lower Main Street or Straight Wharf with a roadway to the north known as Still Dock. The Holmes and Wyer Carpenter Shop (MASS-913) now a theater is to the east.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A.
Nantucket, Massachusetts
July, 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the 1967 Historic American Buildings Survey summer project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. This is the second project of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Director was George L. Wrenn, III. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Architectural information was provided by Professor F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A., (University of Florida). Photographs are by Cortlandt V.D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July 1971.